

George Mason University
College of Visual and Performing Arts
Game Design Program

GAME 210: Basic Game Design

Term: Fall 2015
Section: 005

Meeting Time: Mon, Wed 1:30 to 2:45 pm
Room: Arts and Design 1018

Instructor: Andrew Sweeney
Office: Art & Design Building

Email: asweene7@gmu.edu
Office Hours: By Appointment

Course Description

This course is an introductory overview of the video game development process with an emphasis on game design. Through detailed study of historical as well as current games, students will learn the language and structure needed to develop their own game ideas. Students will learn the many aspects of a game development team and learn how each of these roles contributes to a game's overall design. Projects, in and out of class, will focus on creating and designing game concepts both digital and non-digital. A strong focus on the elements of game design and process will support class projects. Students will get a basic overview of game studies and integrate those concepts into their work.

Course Objectives

Students who complete this course will:

- Be familiar with the evolution of electronic gaming and factors that drove its development.
- Be able to evaluate the video game industry and market
- Understand the basic mechanics and design structure of traditional and digital games.
- Understand elements related to game strategy, theory and gameplay
- Understand the basic game development process.
- Be able to identify the roles within a game development team.
- Analyze and develop game concepts and proposals
- Develop a traditional game in a team environment.
- Develop a simple video game in a team environment.

Requirements and Evaluation

At the beginning of each class, students should come prepared to discuss assigned readings, assigned work, game examples, and ongoing projects. A lecture will follow. Oftentimes there will be team exercises done during class.

Readings and/or short assignments will complement most lectures. Some of these readings will be quizzed during a following class. The assignments will generally be submitted through Blackboard and may be discussed in class.

Students will learn the concepts and terminology of game development and game studies and be able to write and speak about games in both technical and formal ways. Students should explore and understand games as a form of art but also as a form of persuasive play.

For mid-term, students will submit and present a playable, non-digital game of their own design. The mid-term project shall contain an original game concept developed by the students, to be accompanied by a prototype of the game, along with the appropriate material to define the concept, the core mechanics, the visual look and feel and the intended market for their game. This project will begin early in the semester and build upon itself leading up to the mid-term.

(Details on the Midterm requirements will be posted to Blackboard.)

For the final, student teams will submit and present a game design document and a working prototype of a team developed game built with an established game engine. Student teams will be self-evaluated as part of the project grade for work contributed, communication and excellence.

(Details on the Final requirements will be posted on Blackboard.)

Required Texts/Materials:

Rogers, Scott, Level UP! The Guide to the Great Video Game Industry (2nd Edition).

Access to an internet enabled device for coursework and Blackboard submission.

(This can be a personal or university device, as long as access is arranged.)

Paper/Pens/Pencils: For team exercises during class.

Recommended Materials:

PC Desktop / Laptop (For working on projects outside of class/lab)

USB Flash Drive and/or Online File Sharing Account

Grading

Grading will be based on student performance in the following areas of assessment:

- Participation in classroom and attendance (20%)
- Homework assignments (20%)
- Quizzes on the reading material (20%)
- Midterm presentation and project (20%)
- Final presentation and project (20%)

Grades will be based on the following scale:

To receive a grade of "A" a student must achieve a minimum average grade of 90% on the course work requirements.

To receive a grade of "B" a student must achieve a minimum average grade of 80% on the course work requirements.

To receive a grade of "C" a student must achieve a minimum average grade of 70% on the course work requirements.

To receive a grade of "D" a student must achieve a minimum average grade of 60% on the course work requirements.

Failure to receive a "D" grade will result in a grade of "F".

Assignments

Students are expected to check Blackboard on a weekly basis to preview their upcoming assignments. Digital assignments must be turned in via Blackboard.

Written Material:

All written material must be typed, double-spaced, and free of typos, misspellings, and grammatical errors. It must be fully foot-noted (or end-noted) and utilize either the MLA or APA style consistently. If you do not know how or how to footnote, it is incumbent upon you to discover how, there are resources available in the library and on campus. Be sure to cite video, games, news, websites, or any form of media also used in your assignments.

Participation & Attendance

Students are expected to actively engage in class discussions, answer questions when prompted, and in general, add to the collective dialogue. Participation in class discussions and activities is necessary for the course.

Each class is a building block for the next. Some of the information for the course can be found in the text, but not everything. The lecture will cover additional necessary information and discussions that you will not want to miss, so come to class. Attendance does weigh into your final grade (see Grading above). In the event that you have to miss class, you still are responsible for the material covered that day, including project or homework assignments and changes in schedules.

Late Work and Make-up Policy

Meeting deadlines is one of the most important aspects of game design. Please pay careful attention to the due date and time for each assignment. Assignments must be in before the due date and time to receive credit for the assignment.

If extenuating circumstances prevent a student from finishing an assignment before the due date and time, the student must contact the instructor before the assignment is due. Late work will only be accepted at the instructor's discretion. If it is accepted at all, grading may be adjusted based on the tardiness.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Mason is an Honor Code university; please see the University Catalog for a full description of the code and the honor committee process. The principle of academic integrity is taken very seriously and violations are treated gravely. What does academic integrity mean in this course? Essentially this: when you are responsible for a task, you will perform that task. When you rely on someone else's work in an aspect of the performance of that task, you will give full credit in the proper, accepted form. Another aspect of academic integrity is the free play of ideas. Vigorous discussion and debate are encouraged in this course, with the firm expectation that all aspects of the class will be conducted with civility and respect for differing ideas, perspectives, and traditions. When in doubt (of any kind) please ask for guidance and clarification.

MASON EMAIL ACCOUNTS

Students must use their MasonLIVE email account to receive important University information, including messages related to this class. See <http://masonlive.gmu.edu> for more information. All digital communication with the professor must be made using your "masonlive" email account.

OFFICE OF DISABILITY SERVICES

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) at 993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through the ODS. <http://ods.gmu.edu>

OTHER USEFUL CAMPUS RESOURCES:

WRITING CENTER: A114 Robinson Hall; (703) 993-1200; <http://writingcenter.gmu.edu>

UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES "Ask a Librarian"
<http://library.gmu.edu/mudge/IM/IMRef.html>

COUNSELING AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES (CAPS): (703) 993-2380;
<http://caps.gmu.edu>

UNIVERSITY POLICIES

The University Catalog, <http://catalog.gmu.edu>, is the central resource for university policies affecting student, faculty, and staff conduct in university academic affairs. Other policies are available at <http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/>. All members of the university community are responsible for knowing and following established policies.